

THEOLOGY
ISSUE

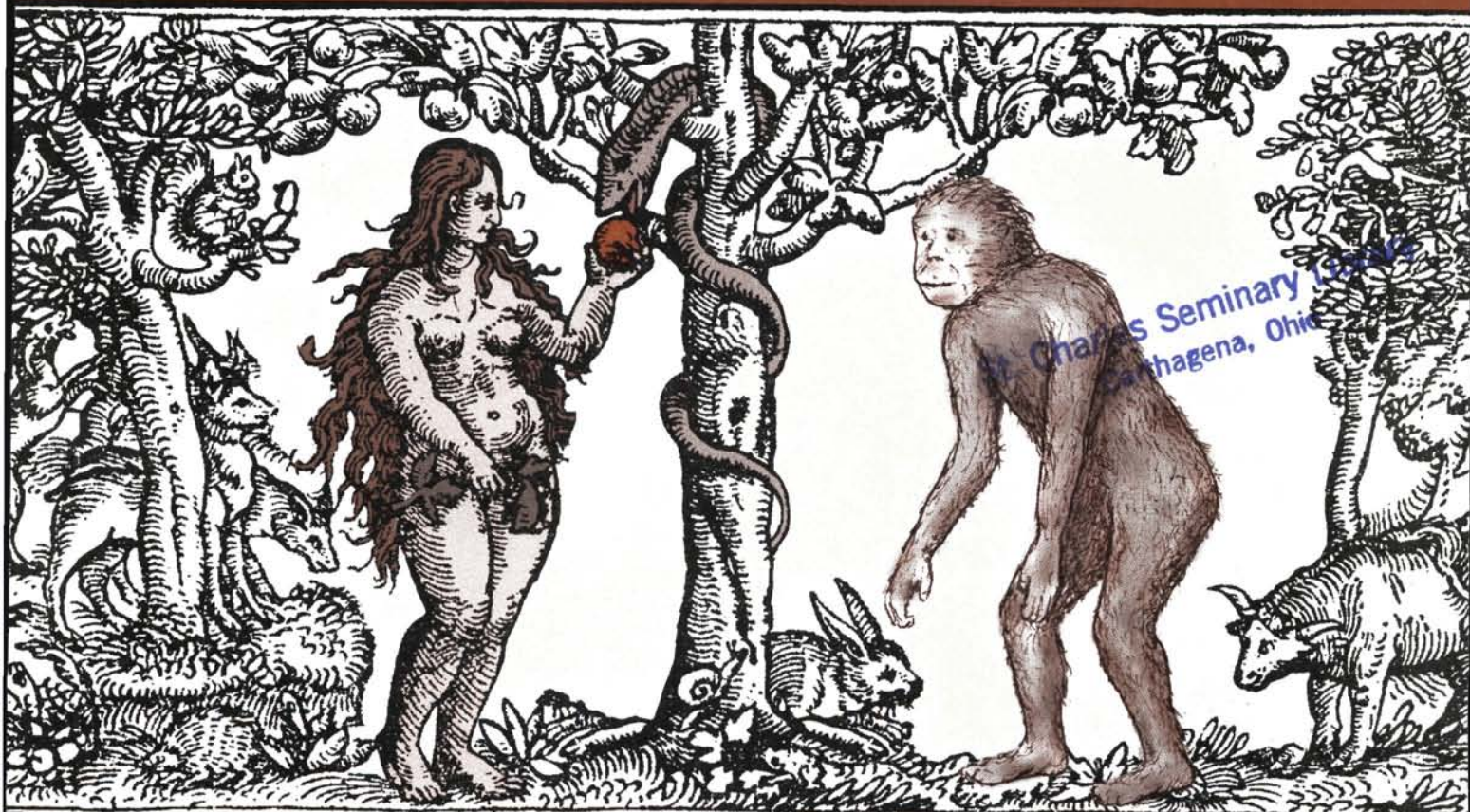
COMMONWEAL

A Review of Religion, Politics, and Culture

January 28, 2000

Theology after Darwin

John Haught



Is it Greene's 'The End of the Affair'?

Richard Alleva

Measuring Poverty

Ed Marciniak

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To the Editors

Thanks to Abigail

I will miss the thoughtful columns authored by Abigail McCarthy ["One Last Word," December 17, 1999], as will countless others. For twenty-five years I have looked to her as the original advocate of feminism in its full Catholic dimensions. Abigail enlightened and charmed us all. I hope you will urge her to write often. Her voice is needed. She has made a unique contribution, and all of us are deeply grateful.

(REV.) ROBERT F. DRINAN, S.J.
Washington, D.C.

Angels we will hear on high

Thank you for your gift of another of Anne Porter's poems, "Music" [December 17, 1999]:

"...And when the music comes to us
With its heavenly beauty
It brings us desolation
For when we hear it
We half remember
That lost native country...."

In return I offer remarks from the National Gallery of Art's brochure on "The Golden Age of Chinese Archeology." A tenth-century marble relief from the tomb of Wang Chuzhi depicts a small orchestra of female musicians performing a courtly concerto. "Ever since the Shang dynasty," the brochure comments, "the Chinese had considered the afterlife unthinkable without music."

ANNE MORRIS
Pittsboro, N.C.

'Rex Christus'

As I was beginning the great "O Antiphons"—our prelude to the most unlikely happening in the history of our universe—I came upon Thomas Landy's article "Christ the King?" [December 17, 1999].

The century winds down and Landy remains moved by the image of Christ the King. The image connotes power,

totally at odds with either Bethlehem or Calvary. But with images failing to speak much to us, Landy rescues our alienation by invoking an infant soothed by a lullaby. That touched us, and God is again revealed.

WILLIAM F. LUCEY
Norwood, Mass.

The facts, man

I am not surprised that Father Andrew Greeley ["Just the Facts, Man," December 17, 1999] disagrees with my conclusion that more and more Catholics are in interfaith marriages, including ones that take place outside the church (see my "Outside the Church," September 10, 1999). In fact, I expected him to disagree, for at least three reasons.

First, in my work, I stress the importance of generational differences among pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and post-Vatican II Catholics, arguing that the different experiences these groups had during their formative years have lasting consequences on their approaches to faith and morals. In his writings, Greeley stresses the importance of age differences, suggesting that religiosity dips during our teen-age and young-adult years, but rebounds as we get older.

Second, I argue that generations differ most on their attachment to the institutional church. Pre-Vatican II Catholics are the most loyal, Vatican II Catholics less so, and post-Vatican II Catholics are the least attached to the church. Greeley argues that today's young adults are just as attached to the church as young adults were back in the 1940s and '50s, but "in their own way."

Third, I contend that symptoms of the declining attachment to the church include Catholics' increasing tendency to marry people who are not Catholic, and their growing willingness to bypass the church when they do marry. In *The Catholic Myth* and elsewhere, Greeley contends that the interfaith marriage rate has remained stable over the years, with 20–25 percent of Catholics in religiously mixed marriages. He does not speak to the issue of marriages

taking place outside the church, except to say that existing data do not permit any conclusions about the frequency with which Catholic/Catholic marriages are witnessed by priests.

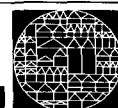
The bottom-line question is this:

Which scenario is more consistent with existing research and the experiences of church leaders? Is it mine, which stresses the importance of generational differences in today's church, declining attachment to the institution, and an increase in interfaith marriages, including ones that are not sanctioned by the church? Or, is it Greeley's, which stresses age differences, the continuing loyalty of young adult Catholics, and the persistence of religious endogamy (marrying someone of the same faith)? I believe there is far more support for my scenario than there is for Greeley's.

Social researchers from Robert Bellah to Robert Putnam and Wade Clark Roof—to mention just a few—have shown that Americans generally, and especially today's young adults, are less attached than ever to all sorts of institutions, including churches. In three national surveys (1987, 1993, 1999) with William D'Antonio, Dean Hoge, Katherine Meyer, and Ruth Wallace, I also find that commitment to the Catholic church is declining (*National Catholic Reporter*, October 29, 1999). While observing that Catholics still embrace pre-Vatican II doctrines embedded in the Nicene Creed and social teachings, I also show that fewer and fewer Catholics say that the church is an important part of their lives. Fewer say they would never leave the church. Fewer attend Mass on a weekly basis. More say that one can be a good Catholic without abiding by church norms (such as marrying in the church). These trends are most apparent among (but not limited to) post-Vatican II Catholics, even as they age. I don't deny that age makes some difference in Catholics' attachment to the church; indeed, in the NCR supplement, I present evidence suggesting that some post-Vatican II Catholics will become more close-

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ly attached to the church as they age. However, I also show evidence suggesting that post-Vatican II Catholics are not as likely to rebound as earlier generations did. My colleagues and I are closer to the truth on this issue than Greeley. So are Scott Appleby and The Catholic University researchers.

My conclusions about interfaith marriage are also more consistent with other studies than Greeley's. When researchers examine spouses' current religious affiliations (thus, not controlling for conversions after marriage), studies consistently show an increase in the percentage of Catholics involved in interfaith marriages. Now, Greeley's own data (column 1 in his table) challenge his long-standing claim that the rate of exogamy (marrying outside of one's faith) has been stable over the last forty to fifty years. Also, even when the trend toward more couples in interfaith marriages re-

flects a trend toward fewer conversions, it is more important than Greeley suggests, because other research clearly shows that children in mixed marriages are less likely to grow up Catholic.

Even when researchers examine religious affiliation prior to marriage (thus, eliminating the effects of conversions after marriage, as in column 2 of Greeley's table), Greeley's interpretation of the data is out of sync with the rest of the field. Robert Johnson (*Religious Associative Marriage*, 1980), Allan McCutcheon (*Review of Religious Research*, 1988), Matthijs Kalmijn (*American Sociological Review*, 1991), and William Sander (*Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 1993) have conducted the most sophisticated analyses of intermarriage trends, using General Social Survey data (and other national data as well). All four researchers conclude that, while a majority of American Catholics continue to marry Catholics, the interfaith marriage rate is increasing.

Other studies also show that the intermarriage rate is increasing among Catholics in Canada and England (and among Protestants and Jews in the United States, for that matter).

Greeley is the only sociologist I know who concludes that what he calls a "pure" interfaith marriage rate is not increasing. Given the discrepancy between Greeley's interpretation and the conclusion most other researchers have reached, I will abide by the consensus in the field until Greeley makes a more convincing case as to why his idiosyncratic interpretation should prevail.

I reported Michael Hornsby-Smith's finding that in England, more and more marriages involving at least one Catholic are taking place outside the church. Preliminary analysis of our 1999 survey indicates the same pattern in the United States (see NCR, October 29, 1999). Six percent of pre-Vatican II Catholics in same-faith marriages say their marriages were not approved by the church, versus 31 percent of post-Vatican II Catholics. Thirty-five percent of pre-Vatican II Catholics in interfaith marriages say their marriages were not sanctioned by the church, versus 55 percent of post-Vatican II Catholics. Our on-going analyses of these data (including comparisons of cradle Catholics who married cradle Catholics with those who married non-Catholics) will be reported in our new book, which will be out by the end of the year.

Finally, I said that my findings are consistent with the pastoral experiences of most of the priests, sisters, and lay leaders I know. Now we learn that they also compare favorably with the experiences of Father David K. O'Rourke, a Dominican priest, former pastor, and currently a member of the Oakland marriage tribunal, who says my views "are on target" (see "Vows, Not Laws" December 17, 1999), and Brother Jeffrey Gros (see Correspondence, October 8, 1999), who says they are consistent with the experiences of people working in related pastoral

(Continued on page 29)

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Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, author of *Dead Man Walking*

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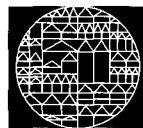
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C O M M O N W E A L



Of mice, jellyfish & us

One of the great challenges of the twenty-first century will be our response to the combined power of new reproductive technologies and manipulation of the human gene. Two recent news stories illustrate the heart of the problem: scientists recognize they now face serious ethical problems but continue to do more or less nothing about them.

A *New York Times* story (December 23, 1999) reports a successful experiment in which jellyfish genes were mixed with the sperm cells of the rhesus monkey. The sperm, subsequently injected into monkey eggs, bypassed the natural fertilization process, allowing the jellyfish gene to enter the monkey egg. This process produced monkey embryos carrying the jellyfish gene. How do scientists know their experiment worked? One-third of the embryos glowed when a fluorescent light was shone on them; in another experiment, eleven of fifty-seven mice born through the same technique had green-glowing tails. This is scientific progress?

Some scientists think so. These seemingly modest developments in reproductive technology may eventually pave the way for sophisticated programs of genetic engineering, ultimately with human genes. Technical difficulties remain to actually inserting a human gene, for example, into a mouse egg, or the even more humanly compatible pig egg. We are promised, however, that these techniques will help in the development of spare human organs. And someday inserting a modified gene into a human egg could reduce susceptibility to diseases such as AIDS or Alzheimer's. Who can doubt that when it can be done, it will be done? Progress and profits beckon.

Of course, all of this lies in the future. But not wholly, for these reproductive techniques work their way into human medicine in the form of infertility treatments. The direct insertion of a single sperm into an egg is already possible and some ten to twenty thousand efforts a year are made on human eggs. But as the jellyfish experiments showed, direct insertion of sperm into an egg provides none of the protective functions of natural fertilization that separate the sperm's outer protein coat (and extraneous matter such as viruses) from its genetic material. Who knows what children born of such techniques may have floating around as extraneous genetic or viral material? Not jellyfish genes, we hope.

Consider the second story. Remember Dolly the clone, that singular sheep and media sensation of 1997? She has been surpassed. A prize Japanese bull has been cloned from skin cells scraped from its own ear (*New York Times*, January 5, 2000). Four calves were produced with far greater efficiency and less expense than the cumbersome technique that produced Dolly. But they haven't gotten the attention she did—where are the baby pictures? For experiments creating cloned calves and jellyfish-enhanced monkeys have become everyday science and ho-hum media events. Yet in these stories and others like them, one thing has not changed, the invocation of ethical dilemmas.

Funny thing though, they are the same ethical dilemmas we've heard about for twenty-five years, and their invocation does not bring reflection or resolution. Ethical handwringing might better describe what scientists say in stories announcing their successful experiments. More fascinating than jellyfish genes in

monkey tails, then, is ethical agnosticism in the face of scientific advance.

The most obvious ethical dilemmas are presented in moving from animal to human genetic experimentation. What risks will it pose? Who can know before the actual experiments take place? In the face of uncertainty, who can give informed consent? Gene replacement therapy promises to cure our ills. But children given modified genes at conception may be born and raised, perhaps reaching adulthood, before the full effects of any alteration or treatment can be known. Even now, one physician who does direct insertion of a human sperm into an egg acknowledges that extraneous material may enter the egg—although no infants born as a result of this technique have yet shown a tendency to unusual diseases or conditions. Does that mean nothing is amiss?

Another physician, who describes himself as “an ethical religious man,” says he will include the new information in counseling patients, but “they can decide whether they want to go forward or not.” Presumably this meets his ethical obligation. The same physician also claims that he would not recommend to his patients every advance in technology, “just because there is a market for it.” But are there “treatments” before physicians and their scientific colleagues work to develop them through animal experiments? And are there markets before physicians themselves offer treatments?

Down the road, cloning human organs in monkeys or pigs will present the same round of ethical handwringing. Yes, it presents risks. Once the technical barriers are breached, how can the risks to humans be fully known without actually transplanting cloned organs? Fully consenting to the risks, sick and dying people will acquiesce in the hope of renewed health and life. Who will stop them? Perhaps, at first, health insurance companies will say “no”; predictably, they will be beaten back by “compassionate” legislation. Institutional review boards in hospitals and research institutes seem ready to approve potentially effective treatments (especially for fatal conditions), leaving the risk questions to

the future. And then, of course, millions even billions of dollars are being invested in these projects. Who will really say no to the market?

Is this any way to approach ethical decision making in matters of novel and risky experiments that will affect not just individuals, but the whole human community and the animal and plant world that sustains us?

What is all of this doing to creation? For if natural selection is part of the marvelously adaptive nature of all life on earth (see, John Haught’s “Evolution and the Humility of God” on page 12), who are scientists to decide that some genes should be enhanced or modified, while others are disabled? If the process of selection and adaptation takes eons, how can we foresee the consequences of even the simplest alteration in our genetic make-up, or that of the jellyfish and rhesus monkey?

We are all original sinners, as Sidney Callahan reminds us on page 7, but do we know nothing about hubris or heedlessness? If we learn nothing from the story of Adam and Eve, can we learn something from the development of the atomic bomb or the overuse of antibiotic medicines? Do we know nothing about the power of nature to strike back? Have we not learned that ethical questions are real questions? They require real reflection and real answers. Yes, there is medical progress to be made in genetic research, but real progress also requires us to say: Stop and think.

FATHER & SON

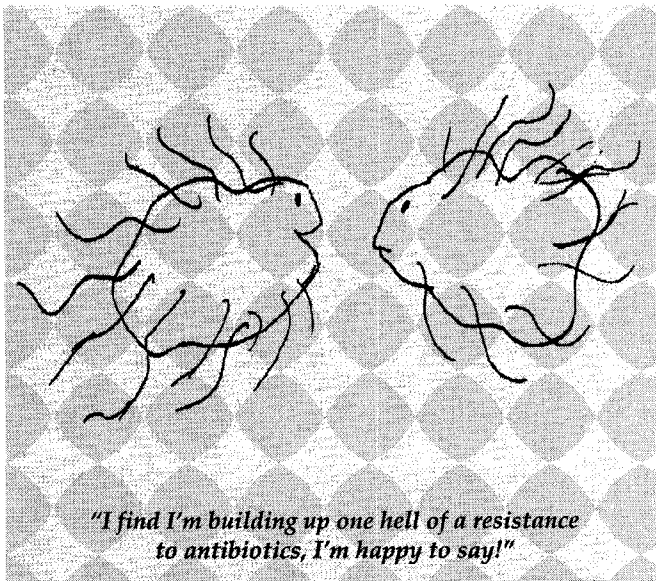
Send Elián González home to his father in Cuba. What could be more obvious or compassionate? Furthermore, it is the law, not only civil law but natural law as well. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service has made the right decision, and yet does not carry it out. Why not?

Attorney General Janet Reno, having disallowed the decision of a Florida state judge to grant a custody hearing to Elián’s great-uncle, allows him to petition a federal court. If the law is clear, as it seems to be, and if the INS has interpreted it correctly, as it seems to have done, what purpose is served in waiting for a federal judge to rule so? As time passes, who can doubt that the situation will become ever more painful for the boy, for his family in Cuba as well as his family in Miami.

Extortion-like protests in the streets of Miami and demagoguery in the corridors of Congress should have no bearing on the final outcome of this decision.

The case of Elián González is a tragedy. His mother died trying to bring him to the United States. In a nation of immigrants, her death naturally has a deep resonance. But it shows no disregard for her sacrifice, nor any naiveté about the political life of Fidel Castro’s Cuba, to say that a boy who has lost his mother is best reunited with his father.

Happy children grow up everywhere—even in Cuba.



SIDNEY CALLAHAN

WE'RE ALL ORIGINAL SINNERS

Don't give Adam & Eve all the credit

As a practicing sinner I don't need to be convinced of the reality of personal sin. Whenever I give in to the dreary enslaving powers of sin, it's not a question of ignorance or mental incapacity: I know what God wants of me and choose to do otherwise.

Like most nice people, I specialize in sins of omission. We lukewarm believers choose sloth and selfishness rather than commit mayhem. Only dedicated crusaders for evil reach the depths, or heights (?), of sin. They follow Lucifer's rebellious cry in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, "Evil be thou my good."

Yet a firm belief in the capacity for sin does not solve the problem of why human beings incline to evil. The human proneness to sin has been explained by the church in its developed doctrine of Original Sin. The catechism explains that Original Sin ensures that each human being, as a descendant of Adam and Eve, inherits "a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice." The church no longer requires that we take the "figurative language" of Genesis literally, but the message remains. The original harmony of creation was lost because of the personal sin of our first parents who abused their freedom and disobeyed God. With their lack of trust in their Creator, "death makes its entrance into human history. After that first sin, the world is virtually inundated with sin."

Now how does a Christian who accepts the scientific findings that support evolution make sense of this traditional teaching? I respond by attempting to construct an account of the human condition that incorporates all the sources of truth available from Scrip-

ture, church teaching, scientific evidence, and human experience. To start with the last first, I can say that having raised six children and one granddaughter I am firmly convinced that all human beings, even the most adored and adorable, possess not only a hunger for love and goodness, but innate inclinations toward selfishness. The collective experience of history, especially of the deadly twentieth century, makes the point all too well.

When turning to evolutionary theories of human nature, I find more support for an inherited "mixed motivation" in the human species. On the one hand, humans cannot survive or function as a social species without parental altruism and group bonds that produce sacrifice for others. On the other hand, each individual inherits a strong competitive drive toward self-interest, dominance, and an impetus toward pleasure and survival.

In an evolutionary perspective, the human species is the result of mutations, natural selection, and contingencies that produced an ever more complex organism. Eventually, highly intelligent big-brained social animals appeared. As intelligence and consciousness increased,

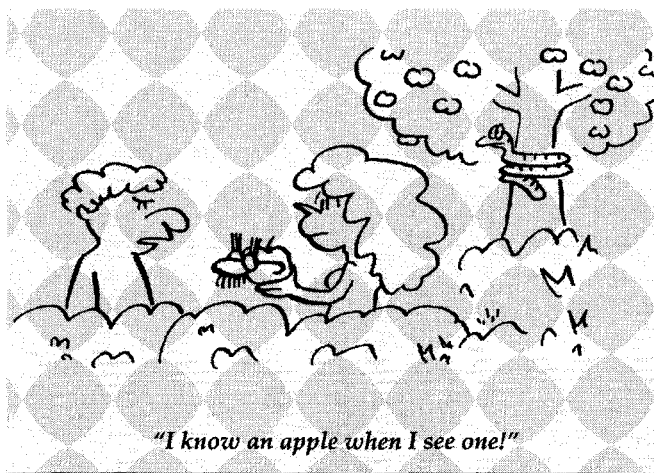
there came a time in which human self-consciousness emerged. (The great mutation or creation?) With the development of a symbolic abstract sense of self, a human being can reason and feel in ways beyond other animals. Humans are "the self-interpreting animals" because of their evolved capacities of reason, language, and emotional intensity. Humans have the capacity to choose freely and consciously between alternatives.

With the capacity for self-consciousness, rationality, and intense emotions, humans can evaluate their acts by symbolic and moral standards of worth. When the knowledge of good and evil becomes possible, so do shame, guilt, and pride. The freedom to choose between good and evil brings inner conflict and temptation.

In human beings, evolution has produced a human body and brain that are incredibly complex and multistructured. A multitude of different systems and modules must interact for humans to function in space and time. The human mind is modular, with different brain processes and circuits, conscious and unconscious, having evolved for different purposes. Of course there are advantages in having so many different operating systems at work, for if one fails, another can function. But conflict between different systems and motives also becomes inevitable.

In their self-conscious freedom, human beings can choose selfishness or altruism, truth or deception. The push toward selfish dominance and control that fueled successful evolutionary selective processes remains powerful while the pull of goodness, love, reason, and beauty remains potent. Heightened self-awareness brings the further realization that an individual does not have the ability to control the environment or the self. In particular, reason brings the foreknowledge of death with its fears and anxieties over loss.

Unfortunately, the human condition includes built-in inner weaknesses arising from impotence, fear, inner divi-



sions, and mixed motivations. While acts of selfishness that do harm to others for personal advantage, or acts of going along with evils to avoid pain and loss, are not necessarily determined, they are inevitable. Given the evolved inner divisiveness of human nature we can see why the concept of Original Sin is necessary.

As I compare my evolutionary account of Original Sin with the catechism's exposition, I see a fairly good fit. Yes, as evolutionary psychologists and Christianity affirm, we are one corporate body or human race (or species) that through genetic inheritance shares a psychic unity. The human race as one species could be said to fall "in Adam" as well as to be redeemed by Christ. Yes, also, to the concept that a self-conscious knowledge of good and evil is the required prelude for sinning. We could agree too that death truly enters human history when human beings have developed the self-conscious intelligence to fear the extinction of the conscious self.

One difference in my evolutionary account and the catechism's is the latter's claim that our human ancestors personally rebelled against God at some specific time in the past, and thereby destroyed an original harmony among God, humanity, and the natural world. Given the evolutionary evidence, I would surmise that the biblical time line misidentifies the past with the present and future. Humans are by nature wounded. Harmony never existed in the past, but instead lies in the future. Christ's redeeming work is bringing a new creation to birth, a future Eden. Our sense of longing for paradise springs not from the past but from the imprinted image of God in the human creature. The beauty and goodness of the world, the wonders of humanity's innate capacities for thought, language, art, and love create the desire for the company of God.

Christ fulfills our desire. His complete wholeness and integrity, his wholehearted loving union with God wins us salvation from sin. As the firstborn of a new creation groaning toward fruition, Christ transforms human nature. We may disagree over the sources of human sin and woundedness, but not about who heals. □

WILLIAM PFAFF

LONELY NEW WORLD

No rules, no rule giver



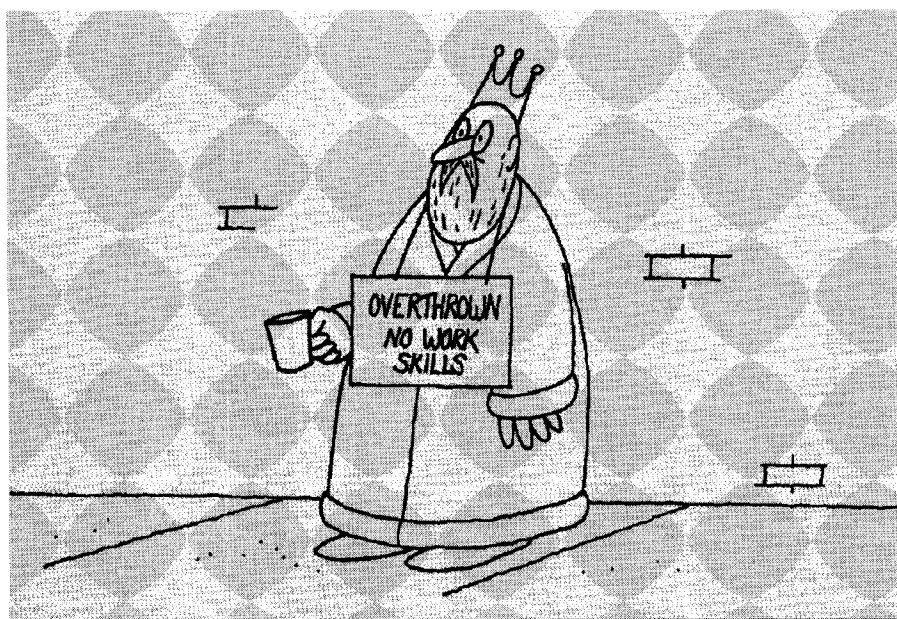
The arrival of the new millennium raises a question I have not seen discussed, and which seems of general concern because of the leading role the West plays in the world, and can be expected to continue to play throughout the new century, if not the new millennium.

The West continues to be the conceptual, economic, industrial, and scientific dynamo for the world, setting the terms by which all the rest function. Such has been its role, at least since the Renaissance, Enlightenment, and the emergence of modern science. The West has generated the most important forces in modern political and economic history: imperialism, nationalism, Marxism, liberalism, capitalism, ideological totalitarianism—and now globalism (considered as an ideological movement of global economic deregulation and integration). It has bestowed upon the rest of the world industrial technology and successive revolutions in theoretical and applied science. The United States has replaced Europe as the leading actor with-

in Western civilization, but Europe and North America remain intimately linked.

However, the West has changed in one significant respect. In contrast to the nineteenth century, there no longer is general deference to the Christian God, or serious acknowledgment that such a deity might exist. This is a fundamental change because it means that the West today no longer acknowledges the existence of an external rule giver or moral authority. It regards humankind as entirely autonomous, existing within a moral framework entirely of its own creation, responsible only to itself.

Until the twentieth century, religion was central to Western civilization. It originally defined that civilization. The monotheism of the Jews, and of the Christianity that developed from Jewish origins, was central to the moral identity of the West. Classical Rome, with its cultural roots in Greece, became Christian with the conversion of the Emperor Constantine in the fourth century. However, there are Greek sources, as well, for the central Western belief that a moral



authority—a moral destiny that must be respected—exists outside human history. The idea exists in Greek philosophy and is demonstrated in the classical tragedies.

Antigone, for example, who defies the will of King Creon in order to fulfill her duty to bury her brother, killed in fratricidal conflict, does so because of her conviction that unwritten laws exist—that they “live always and forever, and no man knows from where they have arisen.” She has to do what is right, whatever the desperate consequences.

This belief in a “natural” law to which men and women are morally obligated was taken for granted by the authors of the American Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man in 1789. John Locke rested a major part of his thought on the concept of natural rights. The UN’s 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights takes for granted that such “rights” exist, even though no political sovereignty has proclaimed them.

Since the nineteenth century, however, the Western consensus of belief in an external moral universe, to which all owe obedience, has very widely broken down. Western thinkers have attempted to construct a rational secular alternative to this moral structure. The late Oxford philosopher Isaiah Berlin has written about the nineteenth-century liberals’ certainty that “solutions to the central problems existed, that one could discover them, and, with sufficient selfless effort, realize them on earth.” He acknowledged that this certainty was eventually disappointed.

The new millennium will be one in which, on present evidence, in the West, both majority and elite belief in God is all but totally unseated, and many would undoubtedly say that this is a good thing. Others would ask why it makes any difference. It makes a difference because for the first time in Western history there is no general acknowledgment of an external standard or reference for how humans and their states should conduct themselves. In 1900 this was not so, but since the 1914–18 war and what followed, the secularization of thought among Western elites has become all but

complete. Popular religious belief in the United States still remains strong, but American elites today are as secularized, or nearly so, as those in Europe.

The record of this period is one of secular political and scientific utopias substituted for religion’s expectation of a salvation located outside of time and history. The result of making utopia a matter of political organization and action in this world has thus far included totalitarianism in the realm of politics and culture, and Faustian scientific ad-

venture, eugenic in purpose but nihilistic in practice.

Possibly these are misleading precedents. No one can say what will happen in the new century and the new millennium. My concern in writing this is simply to note that we in the West enter not only a new millennium, but truly a New Age, when humanity has declared its radical autonomy, its absolute freedom to do whatever it chooses—alone in the universe. □

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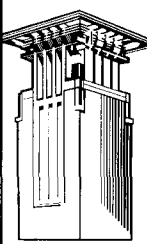
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Ed Marciniak

RECALCULATING POVERTY

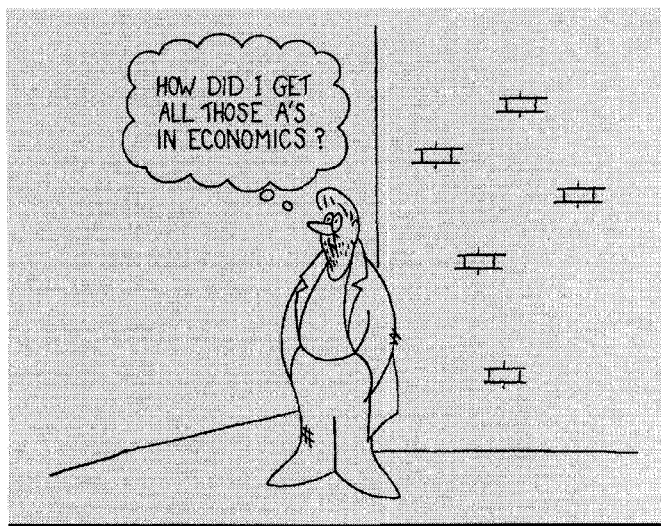
More than dollars & cents

The time has come to de-emphasize the statistical definition of poverty as obsolete, flawed, and mischievous. Identifying the poor of the United States by their income dollars, it should be noted, is a relatively recent enterprise. In the Great Depression era, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt named the poor as those "ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished." His poor were not so much the moneyless as they were the wards of social workers, welfare agencies, mental hospitals, and religious institutions.

But not long after, the poor fell into the hands of the economists who in the early 1960s concocted an "official poverty level," quantified and based on household size. Using that dollar measure, years later, in 1997, the U.S. Census Bureau would designate a family of four, for instance, to be in "poverty" if its annual cash income before taxes fell below \$16,400. Then looking at all low-income people, the Census Bureau concluded that 35.6 million Americans lived in "poverty." Such a conclusion certainly dramatized the pervasiveness of poverty in our champagne economy.

That arithmetical portrait of poverty, however, simultaneously underestimated the real income of U.S. households and misrepresented the nature and extent of poverty across the United States. How? In three ways. First, by not taking into account the following:

- The unreported cash income generated in the underground economy through domestic employment, gratuities, drug deals, prostitution, illegal gambling, etc.
- The value of Medicaid, food stamps, housing subsidies, school lunches, scholarship and other noncash benefits.
- Family assets, such as the ownership of a home and other



holdings, like stocks, bonds, or money in the bank. (More than 40 percent of those the Census Bureau classified in "poverty" in 1995 owned their own homes, 70 percent owned an automobile, 66 percent had air conditioning, and 90 percent enjoyed a color television.)

The resulting paradox: According to the Department of Labor, those in the bottom fifth of U.S. households spent \$14,607 on the average during 1995; at the same time the Census Bureau reported that the average annual income among these same households was only \$8,350! A more accurate and realistic "official poverty level" would be welcome.

Second, the fiscal indicator alone fails to explain why some people have such low incomes, as well as how they might be escorted from the mean streets into the urban mainstream. On the other hand, a noneconomic portrait of poverty would focus attention and remediation on various groupings of the honest-to-God poor, such as the following:

- The residents of the nation's large public housing projects. Scandalously, most of these projects not only accommodate the urban poor but also perpetuate an underclass of second- and third-generation residents. (A forty-two-year-old great-grandmother who has always lived in Chicago's Cabrini-Green project came to my attention last year.) The multigeneration denizens of public housing can readily be compared to Karl Marx's *lumpenproletariat*.
- The idlers, those without the self-discipline to hold a regular job, and others who have never really sought employment. The deepest division in U.S. society lies not between the rich and the poor or between blacks and whites, but between those who have hope and those who have given up.
- The hard-core users, many of whom may be motivated and able to kick their cocaine or alcohol habit by undergoing treatment at a detox center or halfway house but cannot do so. Why? In Chicago, for example, most of the inpatient and outpatient centers have long waiting lists. Were there enough centers, many more addicts would then get the tough love they need to survive and thrive in the human mainstream. Furthermore, prisons and jails in this country do not have enough treatment programs for the tens of thousands of substance abusers who are inmates.
- The large population of unwed teen-age mothers who prolong their poverty into the next generation. As Senator Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.) pointed out more than thirty years ago: "What is unique about female-headed households is that all of them, regardless of race, display a seemingly endemic incapacity to foster social mobility comparable to husband-wife and male-headed families." A household headed by an unwed teen-age mother is a more reliable indicator of poverty than the "official poverty level."
- The uncounted urban poor, nontaxpayers without a telephone or address, many of whom are homeless. They are, for example, the down-and-outers addicted to drugs or alcohol. They include the urban vagabonds who rebel against a shelter's requirements for sobriety and cleanliness. Among them would be the homeless removed last year from the sidewalks of Chicago's Lower Wacker Drive, where they

had lived in cardboard boxes, under blankets, or in some other makeshift shelter.

- The mentally-ill poor now hidden in jails or illegally in nursing homes and public housing for the elderly. Hundreds of thousands of them were once ejected from state health institutions and dumped unmercifully on city streets under the dubious rubric of "community care." Illinois had thirty thousand state beds in the 1960s, down to eighty-eight hundred in 1999. Nationwide in the 1960s, there were more than half a million hospital beds for mentally ill patients; today, fewer than seventy thousand. That is one reason why the New York City Police Department responded to thirty-six-thousand "emotionally disturbed person" calls in 1998, and why the *Chicago Tribune* last August highlighted the "fact that the Cook County Jail has become the largest mental institution in Illinois."

- The more or less permanent poor. They include, for example, the physically disabled, the senile, and the chronically ill. Unless they come from a family of means or marry into one, they have little chance of ever becoming self-supporting, although their descendants may.

- The temporary poor. These are the mainstream poor, those most easily discovered by an income-based index, which, at times, can be useful. They are represented by households whose breadwinner was laid off from work; families overwhelmed by the staggering cost of illness or accident; and homes visited by tragedy, divorce, or the death of a working parent, for example.

- The working poor. In such families, the breadwinner does not earn a living wage.

These nine groupings, not absolutely distinct from one another, account for most of the nation's poor. Except for the working poor, guaranteeing more dollars may temporarily ease their troubles but will not alleviate the underlying causes of their poverty. Some will remain the more or less permanent poor. But many others can be helped to find the ladder on which they can clamber out of poverty. Given the quicksilver character of poverty, each grouping of the poor will require a unique way to leave its poverty behind. Were our antipoverty priorities dovetailed to each of these groups, it would be much easier to determine how effective a program had been.

And finally, third, our preoccupation with the poor as the nation's penniless has had unintended consequences. The Census Bureau's dollar-based generality has tended to gloss over the inadequacy of various public policies and programs designed to lift people out of poverty. It side-tracked, until recently, any urgent scrutiny of a government program, such as the large high-rise public housing projects. Looking across the board at all federal programs, how else can we explain that the \$5 trillion (one U.S. Congressman's estimate) Washington spent since 1969 to shrink poverty has not proved more successful?

We already know that many antipoverty initiatives, private and public, have proved successful: raising the minimum wage, especially for the employees of government contractors;

shuttle services that bring public housing residents to suburban jobs; a high school environment that encourages postponement of sexual activity until marriage; shelters that not only give beds to the homeless but also a motive to get out of them; prisons and jails that humanely transfer the mentally ill and drug abusers to clinics and treatment centers which then provide oversight, regular medicines, and/or housing; and many other programs. We also know, but seldom admit, that these programs are sinfully underfunded.

As we enter the new millennium, our public and private strategies have begun to change. Less priority, for example, is now being given to ascertaining why some people failed to shed their poverty and more emphasis is put on why others among the poor succeeded in joining the mainstream. What have been the most accessible escalators out of poverty? Should public and private agencies expect a beneficiary to begin using them?

Shelters and soup kitchens are needed, but what other means can be developed to convoy the lowest-income households into the urban commonwealth, while at the same time inculcating a sense of achievement in having done so?

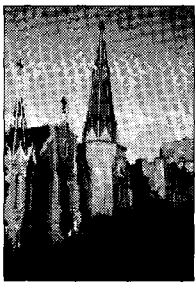
Money, undoubtedly, will ease the woes of some poor households but will avoid confronting the root causes of poverty among people viewed as poor. □

Ed Marciniak is president of the Institute of Urban Life at Loyola University Chicago.

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EVOLUTION & GOD'S HUMILITY

How theology can embrace Darwin

John F. Haught

Charles Darwin claimed that all terrestrial life shares a common ancestry and that the wide array of living species can be accounted for by a process he called "natural selection." By sheer accident, the members of any generation of a given species will differ from one another, and nature will "select" only those able to survive and bear offspring themselves. Over immense periods of time, the selection and inheritance of minute advantageous variations in adaptability will bring about countless new and distinct forms of life, including eventually humans.

Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* almost a century-and-a-half ago, but today the majority of biologists still commend it for its general accuracy. In a synthesis known as "neo-Darwinism" they have simply added to Darwin's original ideas our more recent knowledge of genetics. Important internal disputes still divide evolutionary biologists, but in the scientific community today there is an abiding appreciation of Darwin's genius and the fundamental correctness of his ideas about life's shared ancestry and the mechanism of natural selection. Opinions differ about the roles in evolution played by chance, adaptation, selection, genes, individual organisms, populations, struggle, cooperation, competition, etc. But most scientists today do not doubt that life has evolved—at least roughly—along the lines that Darwin brilliantly laid out.

Following the outspoken evolutionist Richard Dawkins (*The Selfish Gene*), philosopher Daniel Dennett has recently proclaimed that Darwin's "dangerous idea" should prove deadly to all religions and theologies. The accidental character of genetic mutations, the mindless (algorithmic) habits of "selection," and the excessive amount of time evolution takes—these elements of Darwin's theory should destroy once and for all any illusions that life and the universe are products of divine design. Evolution, Dennett says, contradicts all traditional religious intuitions that we live in a cosmos cared for by God. And it is only because theology has ignored evolution that it continues to survive.

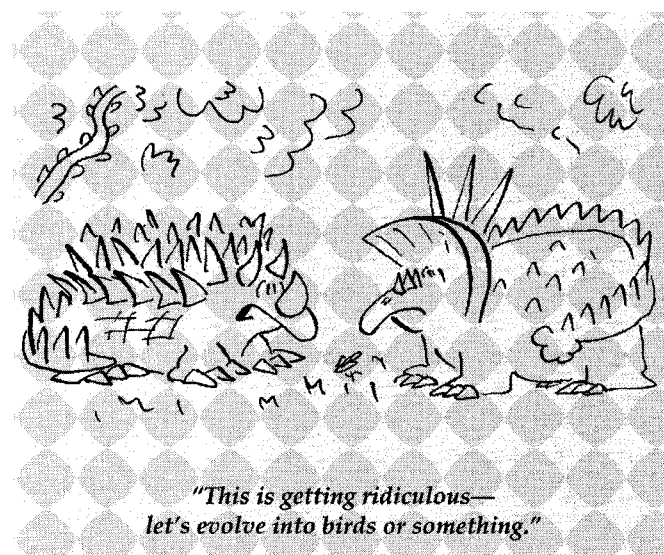
Perhaps, then, it is time for theology to give Darwin another look, especially now that his ideas are experiencing such a vigorous renewal in the contemporary intellectual

world. Updated evolutionary interpretations of life, language, behavior, morality, and even religion have lately been gaining unprecedented attention by natural scientists, philosophers, linguists, ethicists, social scientists, and more recently, the medical community. Neo-Darwinism now provides integrating concepts for many of the natural and human sciences. What are its implications for theology?

Darwin & Christian theology

Because chance, blind selection, and enormously "wasteful" periods of time are so ingredient to the unfolding of life, Darwin's picture of nature would appear to raise difficulties about the idea of God. After weighing the now well-founded accounts of life's lumbering journey on earth, any subsequent talk about a "divine plan" for the world will certainly need to be qualified. And the claim that life can be explained adequately by divine "design" will be especially suspect.

Before Darwin, as even Dawkins agrees, the best explanation for the ordered and adaptive features of living organisms seemed to be that of divine "intelligent design," an idea made famous early in the nineteenth century in William Paley's book *Natural Theology*, a work with which Darwin himself was familiar. Paley invited us to suppose that while walking across a patch of ground we stumble upon a watch. If we open it up and examine its interior structure we cannot but conclude that it is the product of intelligent design. Anal-



John F. Haught is professor of theology at Georgetown University. This essay is based in part on his book, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution*, recently published by Westview Press.

ogously we should be able to reason that the even more intricate order in natural phenomena, especially the adaptive design of living things, points toward the world's creation by an intelligent designer.

Take, for example, the fact that the fish's eye is shaped in a round rather than elliptical way, rendering it remarkably "adapted" to seeing clearly under water. Before Darwin such an example of adaptive design would have led us to praise the handiwork of the creator who carefully saw to it that fish would be so remarkably attuned to their habitat. Many other examples of adaptive design could be given, but in every case the only satisfactory explanation for it would have to be a theological one: divine intelligent design.

However, Darwin challenged Paley's argument by claiming to provide a purely naturalistic explanation of the design in living beings. In a Darwinian account, fish would have round eyes today only because in the remote past those with the oval-shaped variety could not see well enough to avoid being eaten by predators. They lost out in the struggle for existence and produced no offspring. On the other hand, those ancestors of fish which, purely by accident, came with rounder eyes could see better under water and survived long enough to have progeny endowed with the adaptive visual capacity. Fish today have the kind of eyes adapted for vision under water only because of the blind and impersonal process of natural selection, not because of any intelligent design.

Darwinians claim that natural selection of adaptive random variations (modifications in the organism now associated with genetic mutations, which Darwin knew nothing about) can explain life's design all by itself—if given enough time. And today scientists estimate that life originated as long as 3.8 billion years ago, leaving more than enough opportunity for the purely naturalistic emergence of all the adaptive design in living beings. If time is ample enough, the intricate patterning of life that seems improbable in the short run becomes increasingly more probable as time goes on and as evolution's nonadaptive experiments are eliminated. It would appear, at least to Darwinians, that life's amazingly complex forms do not require any supernatural causation; and so we can discard the design argument of natural theology.

I should comment in passing that evolutionary materialists are not alone in celebrating the apparent death of design arguments for God's existence. Some mainstream religious thinkers, especially those influenced by the famous Swiss theologian Karl Barth, want nothing to do with natural theology either. They view the design arguments that have been central to natural theology as idolatrous attempts on the part of finite humans to grasp the infinite and incomprehensible God in rational terms. Rational arguments always run the risk of diminishing the mystery of God, seeking to bring it under the human mind's control. For religious reasons, they argue, we should be grateful to Darwinians for helping to destroy

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the pretentiousness of natural theology.

Of course, not everyone would agree. In his controversial book, *Darwin's Black Box* (The Free Press), biochemist Michael Behe, for example, offers an interesting new pitch for the theory that life is the result of "intelligent design." He argues that Darwin's notion of a gradual evolution from simplicity to complexity cannot explain life's intricate patterns, even at the level of the cell. For most Darwinians, Behe observes, the living cell is a "black box," something whose general functions may be known, but whose inner workings remain hidden in darkness. However, biochemistry has now beamed its lights into Darwin's black box, revealing in the living cell a micro-world of "irreducible complexity" for which Darwinian biology has never been able to give an adequate account.

Darwin himself had conceded that if life's variety came about in any other way than very gradually, that is, by way of tiny changes accumulating over long periods of time, then his theory would be in trouble. Highlighting Darwin's proviso, Behe is now trying to show that the cellular constitution of living beings could not have occurred incrementally, or step-by-step, as a pure Darwinian would assume. The cell's complex inner composition cannot function at all unless all the parts are simultaneously present, working in tightly integrated confederation. Hence, gradual emergence, which allows the pieces of life to fall into place only one at a time, cannot even explain the cell, let alone the larger world of life. The Darwinian explanation of life is demonstrably mistaken. The only conceivable alternative is "intelligent design."

To many anti-Darwinians, Behe's ideas are exciting, and Behe has become a comforting presence at a number of recent gatherings of conservative Christian groups, some of them bordering on creationism. To Darwinians, however, whatever the merits of biochemical analysis of the cell's complexity may be, the implicit appeal to theology in the pages of a book on science is a craven cop-out. And the scorn with which some scientists have greeted Behe's rather guileless proposal is itself an interesting object of study. Much of the derision comes from evolutionary materialists like Dawkins who are no less ideologically indentured than creationists themselves.

Beyond design

I believe that Behe's book deserves attention, for Darwinian biology has by no means done away with all the mysteries of life. Even if Darwin is right, he hasn't told us the whole story, as he himself seemed humble enough to admit. Nevertheless, what strikes me after reading arguments like Behe's is that if Darwinian theory is inadequate to the reality of life, so also is the notion of "intelligent design." The problem, to put it bluntly, is that neither the many Christian proponents of "intelligent design," nor their materialist opponents actually deal with life. Contemporary materialist interpretations of Darwin, which I cannot deal with here, squeeze all the sap out of the life process from the very start by reducing life to chem-

istry and evolution to a purely mechanical process. But the advocates of "intelligent design theory" focus on the lifeless idea of order to such an extent that they pass over the novelty that is also characteristic of living processes.

Design without novelty is deadness, not life. Life is impossible without being constantly in process, and this means being open to what is new. In any truly living process the entry of genuine novelty always disturbs present design. Life requires the breakdown of present order as a condition for self-organizing in new ways. Order, at least in a processive universe where biological evolution occurs, is always made ragged around the edges by life's leaning toward new being. Consequently a theology fixated on design will miss the full reality of life. What is worse, by associating the idea of divine creativity only with the fact of order, it removes God also from the flow of life.



theology obsessed with order and design is, I believe, ill-prepared for evolution. And as long as we think of God only in terms of a narrowly human notion of "design," the "atheism" of many evolutionists will seem appropriate enough. For, what if "God" is not just an originator of order, but also the disquieting wellspring of novelty? And, moreover, what if the cosmos is not just an "order" but a still-unfinished labor of creation? Suppose we look very carefully at the undeniable evidence we have today that the universe is still coming into being. And suppose also that "God" is less concerned with imposing a plan or design on this process than with providing a "vision" for the universe that allows it to participate in its own creation. If we make these conceptual adjustments, as I believe both contemporary science and a consistent theology actually require that we do, the idea of God becomes not only compatible with evolution, but it also logically anticipates something like the kind of life world that Darwinian biology sets before us.

In Christian theologians' dialogues with evolutionary scientists, it is easy to get hung up defending some notion of "intelligent design" and thereby losing sight of faith's primordial experience of God as humble, self-giving love. Unfortunately, the experience of God that occurred in connection with the life and death of Jesus, an encounter with ultimacy that Hans Küng rightly calls a "revolution" in the whole human story of God-consciousness, is taken only minimally into most contemporary Christian theological engagements with Darwin. In debates about the compatibility of religious trust with the randomness, struggle, and suffering that occur in evolution, Christian theologians often resort to an apologetics that glosses over the struggle and pain in the earth's hugely prolonged life story. They defend notions of divine "power" and "intelligence" that only magnify the question of why an all-capable God would remain silent in the face of life's suffering.

Theology needs to face the Darwinian account without flinching. This means that it should stop seeking refuge in pre-Darwinian restoration of design arguments, an approach that brings religion into unnecessary tension with science.

And it also means that mainstream theology should examine its habit of ignoring evolution and confining its attention almost exclusively to human concerns. We need new theologies of nature genuinely responsive to the fascinating but troubling picture of life that evolutionary science is giving us.

I would suggest that we may discover the foundations for a theology of evolution in two images given in the Christian witness to God. The first is the startling, bewildering, and often suppressed image of God as humble, self-giving, fully relational, suffering love. Instead of asking how we can possibly defend the idea of God's intelligence and omnipotence against the objections of Darwinians, we should be asking what kind of universe ours should be if it is grounded in an infinitely compassionate Mystery that pours itself out into the world in unrestrained and vulnerable love.

The second image is given in the encompassing biblical theme of God as one who makes promises, and who relates to the world not by compelling it from the past, but by opening it up to an enlivening and unpredictable future. This is the image of a God who invites, rather than forces, the world to realize new possibilities of being. This is not the God of frozen design, but One who disturbs the *status quo* for the sake of richer life. This is the image of God as "Power of the Future" (Wolfhart Pannenberg). It is the God whom Karl Rahner in his later writings began to call the "Absolute Future." It is what Teilhard de Chardin had in mind when

he referred to the universe as resting organically on "the future as its sole support," that is, upon a God who is less Alpha than Omega. It is the God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, the Pauline God of new creation.

Our treatises on God and evolution can easily become so sidetracked by obsession with the notions of order, plan, and design that we may ignore altogether the biblical experience of a self-giving and promising God. An understanding of God as "self-emptying love" and "power of the future" can provide the foundations for an evolutionary theology that does not need to edit out the messiness in Darwinian portraits of life. While it must certainly reject the deadening materialist ideology within which neo-Darwinians often package their popular renditions of evolution, this twofold, biblically grounded understanding of God seems quite consonant with the astounding discoveries of evolutionary science itself.

The 'interested God' of religion

The physicist Steven Weinberg, an avowed atheist, perceptively observes that attempts to reconcile religiously uninformed concepts of deity with modern science are futile. Instead, he insists, we must ask whether the sense of God as operative in actual religious awareness coheres with contemporary scientific understanding. Weinberg contends it does not. And he goes on to say that evolutionary biology, even more forcefully than physics, rules out the "interested" God of religious faith.

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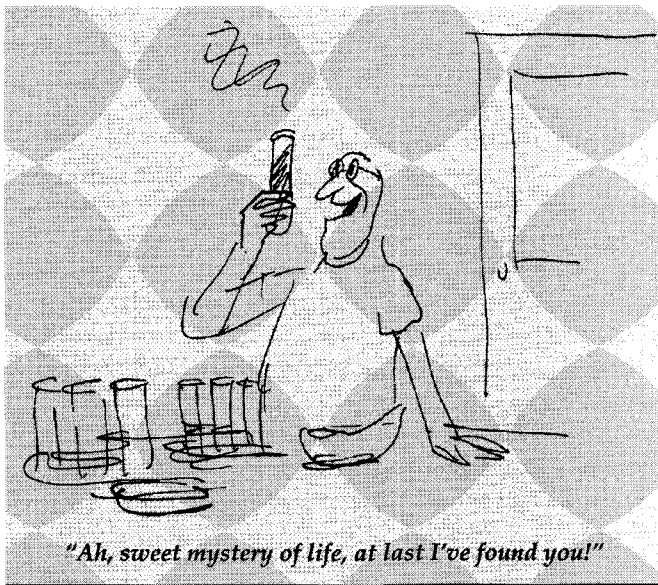
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One does not have to accept Weinberg's conclusion in order to agree with him that we should connect our thinking about issues in science and religion to images and convictions about God as these are found in actual religious experience rather than in philosophically domesticated versions of theism. For Christian theology this means that, rather than force the idea of God to fit a narrow notion of intelligent design, we should seek to understand the natural world, and especially its evolutionary character, in themes of promise and suffering love associated with the God of Abraham, and of Jesus, the crucified and risen Christ.

Christians have discerned in the "Christ-event" the unreserved self-emptying, or "kenotic," love of God. And, at the same time, they have experienced in this event a God whose effectiveness takes the form of a power of renewal that opens the world to a fresh and unexpected future. This means quite simply that in Christian theology's quest to understand the scientific story of life, it must ask whether and how evolution might make sense when situated in a universe that faith claims to be shaped by God's kenotic compassion and promise of new creation. In my new book, *God after Darwin*, I have developed both aspects of this theology of evolution much more extensively. Here I must limit myself to a few words about evolution and divine love.

As noted earlier, what has been especially troubling in Darwin's science is its picture of a world in which randomness mingles with the "impersonal" process of natural selection in such a way that evolution appears to have no direction or inherent meaning. But intrinsic to the notion of divine love is its authorizing creation to strive experimentally for a genuine independence *vis-à-vis* its creator. And this logically requires that God would leave room in nature for randomness or accident. Love by its very nature cannot compel, and an infinite love should not be expected to overwhelm the world with either a coercively directive "power" or an annihilating "presence." A world tied to divine puppet strings, even in its prehuman evolution, must really be not

a world at all, but only an appendage of its maker.

Indeed, we should not be surprised that an infinite love would in some sense restrain itself, precisely in order to give the world the "space" and "time" in which to become something distinct from the creative love that constitutes it as "other." While God would be the creative source of new evolutionary possibilities, we should not be surprised that any universe rooted in an unbounded love would have at least some features that appear to us as random or undirected. Saint Thomas Aquinas himself thought that a world so rigidly controlled by God as to be devoid of accidents is theologically inconceivable.

Even in the originating creation of the cosmos the divine infinity may be thought of—in our imperfect human concepts—as "contracting" itself, forgoing any urge to direct the creation forcefully or to absorb it into the divine. An overwhelming and suffocating display of divine "presence" or "omnipotence" would leave no room for anything other than God. Such divine magicianship would extinguish any genuine evolutionary *self-transcendence* on the part of the cosmos. As theologian Jürgen Moltmann, partly influenced by the Kabbalah, has repeatedly speculated, it is a humble self-withdrawal on God's part that allows the cosmos to stand forth on its own and then to evolve as a relatively autonomous reality distinct from its creative ground. In this sense, creation and its evolutionary unfolding would be less the consequence of a rigid divine "plan" than of God's humble and loving "letting be."

Consequently, if ultimate reality is essentially self-giving love, and if love in turn entails "letting the other be," then, theologically speaking, both the world's original coming into being, and its indeterminate Darwinian transformation through vast periods of temporal duration, would be completely consistent with the Christian experience of God.

Divine intimacy & the world's independence

The world can have its own being and realize its own evolutionary potential only if God's creative power and love consist of a kind of self-concealment. God's hiddenness, a thoroughly biblical theme, is not a divine "abdication" in any deistic sense, but instead a condition of deep intimacy with the world. In its encounter with the crucified man Jesus—and not in philosophical reasoning alone—Christian faith is given the key to God's relation to the world. The cross reveals to faith the paradoxical closeness of the self-absenting God from whose limitless generosity the world is called, but never forced, into being and becoming. This kenotic image of God, even though inaccessible to philosophical and scientific rationality as such, nevertheless gives a surprising intelligibility to the cosmic whole in which Darwinian evolution turns out to have played so important a part.

Not surprisingly, both scientific skeptics and theists whose ideas of God center primarily on the notion of "intelligent design" have found Darwinian ideas religiously incoherent. Skeptics have rejected a divine "planner" as incompatible with the undirected course of biotic evolution, while many

theists have contemptuously dismissed evolution as incompatible with their notion of a governing deity. A universe entertaining the degree of indeterminacy that Darwin's vision entails seems incompatible with a transcendent power and intelligence. God, the alleged "divine designer," is apparently not "in control" after all. Evolution appears to be a mindless lottery rather than the "mighty act" of an omnipotent God. And the enormous amount of time evolution takes seems to rule out the existence of providence, since a truly intelligent designer would surely not have "fooled around" for so long (billions of years) before bringing about life and human beings.

However, the God given to a faith shaped by the "Christ-event" is not first of all an infinite embodiment of what we humans narrowly understand as rationality, intelligence, or design, but an outrageously "irrational" and mysteriously humble love that comes to meet the world from out of the realm of an open and incalculable future. A theology attuned to this image of ultimacy suggests a way of rendering religiously meaningful the very same scientific data that have led a more "rationally" based theistic preoccupation with design to repudiate Darwinian theory, and scientific skeptics to their pessimistic interpretations of nature.

This in no way means that God is powerless, as some critics of kenotic theology have complained. God's power (by which I mean the capacity to influence the world) is paradoxically made manifest in the vulnerable defenselessness of a crucified man. As theologian Edward Schillebeeckx has rightly observed, such defenselessness is not weakness. Vulnerability, he says, can effectively disarm evil, and it can do so much more powerfully than force. The revelation of divine "power" in the form of divine humility, moreover, is not only accordant with, but ultimately explanatory of, the curious world that evolutionary science now presents to us. The randomness, struggle, and seemingly aimless meandering which the evolutionary story of life discloses as the underside of its marvelous creativity are consistent with the idea that the universe is the consequence of an infinite love.

If God were "powerful" only in the very crude sense of possessing the capacity to manipulate or design things coercively, then the facts of evolution might be theologically problematic. But an infinite love, as the Roman Catholic theologians Karl Rahner and Elizabeth Johnson, among others, have made clear, will not manipulate or dissolve the beloved cosmos. In the act of seeking intimacy with the universe, God forever seeks to preserve the difference and otherness of creation. God's creative love constitutes the world as something ontologically distinct from God, and not as a simple extension of the divine being.

In order for the world to be independent of God, and therefore to undergo a genuine self-transcendence in its evolution, a God of love concedes to the world its own autonomous principles of operation—such as the "impersonal" laws of gravity, natural selection, and *self-organization*. God offers to the life-process opportunities for instantiating new forms of order, but these are not forcefully imprinted on

living beings. The "self-distancing" of God, once again, is in no sense apathy, but paradoxically a most intimate form of involvement. As the neo-Darwinian zoologist Charles Birch puts it, God loves the world enough to respect the freedom and spontaneity of the creation. It is because of this divine respect for creation that evolution occurs.

Theological foundations

One of the implications of the Council of Chalcedon is that God apparently wants to relate to a world that is "other" than God. But for that kind of relationship to be possible the world, including Christ's human nature, must be allowed to be itself. The presence of God to the world is not one in which the world is dissolved into God. To long for such a union is an expression of monophysitism, the ancient—and persistent—heresy according to which the distinctively human nature of Christ melts away into the divine. Although much of what is called "religion" longs for a monophysitic kind of union with God, I believe the essentially Christian instinct is to foster the sense of an eternally differentiated union of the world and God.

"True union differentiates," as Teilhard de Chardin often emphasized and as Trinitarian theology has also always implied. Accordingly, it is out of a longing to relate to the world in a differentiating rather than dissolving kind of union, that God forgoes any annihilating, monophysitic "presence" to it. I suspect that at times our longing to have a world carefully "designed," and our pious rebellion against the idea of a kenotic God, betray a hidden longing for the kind of divine presence that gradually liquefies rather than solidifies the world's difference from its divine ground. Beneath much of our religious anxiety about Darwin perhaps there is a persistent longing for the kind of divine presence or power that holds on so tightly that it refuses to release the world into the realm of liberty.

The prospect of freedom, as the existentialist philosophers sharply registered, always provokes anxiety; and so, to avoid the anxiety of evolution we favor the idea of a world directly "designed" by God rather than one that is called to actualize its independence, hazardously and at times tragically, from within itself. Anxiety, however, can be conquered by love. And it is because we never do justice to the notion of divine love that we are tempted to seek safety in an abstract cosmic order that rules out the invasion of liberating novelty and the invitation to emergent freedom that give meaning to evolution. The God of evolution, however, refuses to reside in a "presence" that blots out the otherness and distinctiveness of creation. God's will is that the world become more and more independent, and that during its evolution its own internal coherence intensify, not diminish.

The God of self-giving compassion is in fact the only God that normative Christian faith can legitimately claim ever to have encountered. And yet, this founding intuition about the nature of ultimate reality all too seldom enters into our thoughts about whether and how the evolution of life can be reconciled with religious faith and hope. □

Richard Alleva

GRAHAM GREENE LITE

'The End of the Affair'



Maurice Bendrix, the hero of Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair*, is one of modern literature's great soreheads. This London novelist is so swept up by his wartime love affair with Sarah Miles, the wife of a government bureaucrat, that her sudden and unexplained termination of the romance devastates him.

Abandoning his art and unable to respond to other women, Bendrix becomes obsessed with the desire to hurt Sarah and wreck her marriage to the dull but needy Henry. Right after World War II, Henry's divulgence that his wife may be having a second affair elates Bendrix because it finally provides both the reason for her withdrawal and a chance to enact his spite. But it turns out that Sarah's latest "lover" is God, who apparently resurrected Bendrix during an air raid after Sarah promised to renounce the romance. This seeming or actual miracle has ignited Sarah's latent spirituality and, even as her own physique deteriorates from pneumonia, she starts to display a saint's ability to heal others. The atheistic Bendrix is completely discombobulated. How do you compete with a rival in whose existence you don't believe? By the time Sarah dies, Bendrix has become a better and a worse man: He's learned compassion for humanity in general and for Henry in particular, but he's also emotionally depleted and can only pray, at the story's close, to a deity in whom he now tentatively believes but certainly does not love, "O God, You've done enough, You've robbed me of enough. I'm too tired and old to learn to love. Leave me alone forever." Notice that Bendrix, a careful man with words, capitalizes the pronoun. The Hound of Heaven has caught up with this nonbeliever. And torn out his heart.

Neil Jordan, who has brought Greene's

novel to the screen, is much less ruthless than that divine dog; he only wants to pluck a few heartstrings. Perhaps Columbia Pictures was willing to finance it because, in outline, it sounds like *Son of the English Patient*. (Conference of the Suits: "Okay, what have we got here? Ralph Fiennes, adultery, World War II, British accents, and one hundred and ten minutes of guilty sex and emotional misery. Academy Awards, here we come!") In fact, this movie is better than *The English Patient*, richer in atmosphere, humor, characterization, and sheer storytelling. Even the love scenes are better: steamier yet also more tender. But the film, so true to the novel for most of its length, finally dissolves Graham Greene's central premise and relieves Sarah of her theological dilemma. And without that dilemma, the story ultimately doesn't make sense, and so it can't be said that the movie even stands on its own merits.

But this film offers plenty of pleasure before that ultimate failure sets in. Jordan's script cuts or combines plenty of incidents from the novel but, at least for the first three-quarters of the story, this is done not to defang the material but to give it dramatic vivacity and momentum. (The most sweeping cut, an entire subplot about an atheistic propagandist, eliminates a great deal of inadvertent smugness.) Again and again, I was gratified by how much of the book's humor Jordan retained, such as the delicious moment when the detective Parkis, who makes his entire living tailing adulterers while cherishing his own middle-class respectability, learns that the name he gave his son, Lancelot, isn't that of the knight who found the Holy Grail, as Parkis thought, but the knight discovered in Guinevere's bed.

Occasionally, Jordan even improves on Greene. One instance: The book's Sarah first attracts the hero because

she's read his novels and doesn't gush over them. Nonsense! No writer ever, ever gets tired of praise. The film cuts this scene but retains the one where Bendrix takes Sarah to a bad movie made from a book of his that she's never read, but she is able to separate the Bendrix wheat from the moviemakers' chaff. Now that's the way to get to a writer's heart!

Ralph Fiennes, with his elegantly nasal voice and icy manner, can't but capture Bendrix's cultivated unlikability—his contempt for himself overflowing into contempt for others—but he also understands how such men can use the appeal of the handsome emotional cripple to awaken the sympathy of women. And when this Iago-with-a-conscience comes to the end of his tether, Fiennes knows how to awaken the audience's sympathy as well.

Upon Julianne Moore's first entrance I thought, "Oh no! She's too wrapped up in her own beauty and elegance to reach the humanity of Sarah!" Within ten minutes I realized what Moore was trying to do. Sarah has to have the *soigné* manner Moore gives her so that it may be shattered by the love affair and its aftermath; the only trouble is the manner does not get shattered enough. This performance is too placid.

The part of the husband is a trap for actors. If its performer were to render Henry as dull as Greene indicates, the audience would be unable to stand him, but a too sympathetic account would make the adulterous couple insupportable. (This is exactly what happened in the Hollywood version of *Madame Bovary*.) Stephen Rea triumphs by portraying Henry as an overgrown schoolboy, the sort who has tea with the headmaster's wife and wins all the prizes. The adult Henry may have continued winning those prizes (he is promised a knighthood for his government service) but has probably turned Sarah into a headmaster's wife, not a recipe for a successful marriage to a passionate woman. And, as the hapless detective Parkis, Ian Hart delights with a just blending of prurience, sweetness, and tweedy respectability. The way his voice always hitches at the word "intimacy" is perfect.

Jordan and his cinematographer, Roger Pratt, splendidly realized the peculiar romance of damp, war-rationed London. If you're a fan of *Brief Encounter*, you'll love this aspect of *Affair* with its cozy and squalid tea shops and its endless rain, with its lovers kissing under the shelter of raincoats held overhead, with its drizzle-making patterns on window panes, with its showdown of lover and husband rubbing verbal salt into each other's wounds while sharing an umbrella on a park bench during yet another downpour.

Having achieved cinematic flow, convincing characterizations, and wonderful atmosphere, Neil Jordan then proceeds to cut the heart out of his movie in its last twenty-five minutes by having Sarah renege on her promise to God. She resumes the affair, which is finally ended only by her death. Whatever the moral and theological implications of this, it is a *dramatic, artistic* mistake. The force of Sarah's character, her fate (and that of the two men in her life), and the central irony and piteousness of the

story, all flow from Sarah's determination to keep her promise. Jordan dumps all this and opts instead for simple domestic pathos as husband and lover unite to nurse the dying woman they both love, later becoming a sort of poignant "odd couple" after her death.

I was touched but couldn't help seeing that this made Sarah's promise over Bendrix's (seeming) corpse nothing but a temporary stumbling block to the affair and not, as Greene intended, a transformation of it into a crucible. Sarah is kin to Jean Anouilh's Becket, a worldly creature who stumbles on transcendence but, once awakened, clings to her divine lover even as her heart yearns for the earthly one. This is precisely what gives the novel its cruel, creepy strength. But Neil Jordan's Sarah is just another sensual, good-natured person—one of us, glamorized. The miracle Sarah performs in the book is a certification of her holiness. That miracle is in the movie, but there it seems nothing but a certification of a nice woman's niceness.

There is an ambiguity in the final scenes

of the movie that not only Greene never intended but that Jordan himself probably doesn't want. To wit: Why does Sarah die in the end? In the book, her self-neglect leading to pneumonia seems the sort of unconscious suicide that a lot of saints have committed. But the movie's Sarah dies of...well, I don't know what the hell she dies of. Consumption? Too many walks in the rain? Or does God kill her because she didn't make good on her promise to him? Is God a leg breaker for his own collection agency?

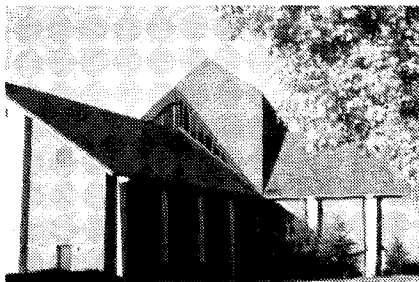
In a key scene of *On the Waterfront*, Marlon Brando furiously rounds on Eva Marie Saint for trying to get him to reform: "Will you quit with all that conscience stuff!" I have a notion of Neil Jordan pacing the floor of his study with a copy of *The End of the Affair* in hand. He thumbs through the first two-thirds, smiling at the rich characterizations, humane wit, and poignant eroticism, all of which he will turn to good cinematic account. Then he gets to the last chapters and all is suddenly not well. Jordan's face darkens, he shrugs his shoulders



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and snorts in contempt once or twice. Finally, he throws the book to the carpet, shakes his fist at the heavens, and

calls out to whatever cloud Graham Greene is floating on: "Will you quit with all that conscience stuff!" □

MEDIA

Celia Wren

MELANCHOLY MOBSTERS

HBO's *The Sopranos*



Wistfulness is probably not the first emotion you'd associate with the Mafia, unless, that is, you've been watching *"The Sopranos,"* the smoothly crafted crime-and-family drama that sailed into its second season on HBO this month. This Emmy-winning series has a lot going for it—keen characterizations, an offbeat narrative rhythm, a droll sense of irony—but what really gives it a distinctive flavor is its atmosphere of subtle nostalgia. Life has proved to be something of a disappointment for the show's protagonist, Tony Soprano (James Gandolfini), an amiable suburban homeowner who just happens to be the leader of a New Jersey mob clan.

Of course, he and his fellow gangsters know that the great days of orga-

nized crime have passed them by, but their malaise is on some level more general—a bona fide freefloating angst, all the more distressing for being vague. In an early session with his phlegmatic therapist, Dr. Jennifer Melfi (Lorraine Bracco), Tony struggled to define his melancholy, which he had associated with a flock of wild ducks that had settled briefly in his backyard swimming pool; when they flew away, they became vague symbols for departed innocence and honesty, a defunct code of honor, childhood, nature before the Fall.

Metaphor on this level may sound more suited to the poetry of William Wordsworth than to a show on premium cable, but anyone who hasn't yet encountered *"The Sopranos"* should rest assured that the series stays down-to-

earth even when it gets mythic. The story's piquancy, after all, depends on the fact that, though they move in criminal circles, the characters are just folks, like you or me. When he is not coordinating thugs and hitmen, Tony Soprano has to drive his daughter to visit colleges and worry about his aging mother (one arch shot in an early episode showed him reading a manual on elder care in the strip joint he and his "colleagues" use as headquarters).

Shrewd writing allows the program to get good mileage out of this concept. In one hypermundane exchange from the first season, for example, Tony's fretful wife Carmela (Edie Falco) commented on their school-age son, Anthony, Jr. (Robert Iler), who may have attention deficit disorder, "You never noticed how he picks at the tongue of his tennis shoe?" In addition to strewing around such well-observed lines, the scriptwriters often opt for anticlimax as a plot technique: When Carmela and her lonely friend the local priest (Paul Schulze) fell into temptation, alone in her house late at night, for example, they resisted. The slightly deflated feeling at the end of such an episode makes the show seem more like real life.

The *Sopranos'* frequently banal existence contrasts strongly with Hollywood-caliber Mafia legend, a fact that is not lost on the characters themselves. Eyes newly opened to the family business, Anthony, Jr., confronted his father with the remark, "It's just like in *Godfather II*!" as the pair head to the orthodontist. This metacultural motif reverberates particularly in the subplots involving Christopher (Michael Imperioli), the impetuous young gangster-in-waiting who is desperate to be officially "made." Christopher thinks of himself as a latter-day Corleone (or is it Al Pacino?); in fact, his life is so metaliterary that he is writing a screenplay about mobsters—write about what you know, right? "It says in the scriptwriting book that every character has an arc," he fumed at one point. "Where's my arc?" It is hard to live up to pop culture.

The legacy of their flesh-and-blood forebears can be just as much of a downer for the Soprano gang. "Values today! Standards are crumbling!" griped a



restaurateur friend of Tony's (John Ventimiglia) on seeing a youth wear a hat during an elegant dinner. Similarly backward-looking, Tony's mother Livia (Nancy Marchand) frequently rhapsodizes about her dead husband ("He was a saint!"). All too conscious of the tradition they've inherited, the characters in "The Sopranos" hurtle up against a modern, matter-of-fact world that makes them feel like fish out of water. When Tony and friends tried to prevent the departure of a local school soccer coach by using quintessential mob tactics (kidnapping the man's golden retriever, for example) their efforts seemed absurd. And when Christopher tried to infiltrate the music business—a field the Mafia used to rule, he assured his girlfriend—he found his way blocked by gangster rappers.

The show's characters may not fully understand that their standards are outdated, but they do sense that something is wrong with the way they define themselves. Tony Soprano has panic attacks not because his job is stressful (even if he does have to hide his guns beneath his mother's sweaters when the feds are on the rampage), but because he feels oppressed by the roles that define him: mobster, leader, husband, father, son (this last poignantly expressed, in one episode, by a shot that showed him standing awkwardly in his mother's empty house, after she had moved into a nursing home).

What has gone wrong for Tony and his associates is that the artificiality of their mobster identities—inherited in large part from Francis Ford Coppola—makes their whole existence feel artificial, and it is this contagion that infuses "The Sopranos" with melancholy. Life today doesn't seem real or immediate enough to the show's characters, who mourn a past they think had more value. Perhaps their story resonates particularly with a public that, on one level, harbors similar suspicions. An exchange between Tony and his therapist in the very first episode hinted in this direction. When her patient confessed to an unshakable feeling that the "best is over," Dr. Melfi replied, "I think a lot of Americans feel like that." □

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The Reform of the Papacy The Costly Call to Christian Unity

John R. Quinn

Crossroad, \$19.95, 189 pp.

Martin E. Marty

The reform of the papacy, here advocated by Archbishop John R. Quinn, is a good idea for several reasons. Aware of the "if it ain't broke don't fix it" principle, Quinn finds enough broken to merit a call for fixing. Such reform is of intrinsic value in respect to an institution integral to the life of the world's largest religious communion. Reform is of evangelical and strategic importance, because it can further the positive work of all Catholicism. And, as Quinn, former San Francisco archbishop, makes amply clear, there are ecumenical implications that cannot be denied, especially if Catholicism is serious about one of the four marks of the church, that it express itself as "one."

The reform for which Quinn appeals would have looked modest to critics of the historic papacy in its worst hours. In the time of medieval papal schisms, of open conflict between popes and councils, and before the Protestant Reformation, the papacy and some of the popes were often corrupt. Their ways and workings cried out for reform. By contrast, it is also possible to say that the adjustments Quinn calls for might look like mere rearranging of the chairs a third of a century after the *aggiorna-*

mento of Vatican II (1962–65).

This gentle but searching critic takes off from a strong appreciation of Pope John Paul II's 1995 encyclical, *Ut unum sint*, a bold reaffirmation of the papacy's interest in furthering unity. Throughout he is predictably and responsibly respectful of the pope, but he cannot avoid comment on occasions when papal action circumvents councils of bishops or expressions such as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, which Quinn once headed.

Are there predictable villains in Quinn's reform drama? No one quite fills the bill. The curia, the bureaucratic web that buffers the pope and often oversteps its bounds, needs reform not because its staff is full of miscreants. Rather, they are victims and perpetrators of the kind of complexifying to which bureaucracies are prone. Quinn's suggested reforms are clear, direct, and consistent with the kind one would propose to secular institutions as well, but quickened by awareness that more is at stake in the church.

The College of Cardinals receives scrutiny because it has acquired importance far beyond its historic and chartered definitions. Elevating cardinals has meant downgrading the other bishops in ways contrary to earlier Christian usage. Again, Quinn offers pointed and positive proposals.

At times his impatience in the face of peculiar actions and particular persons is evident. Although careful not to heap criticism on powerful people such as Cardinals Joseph Ratzinger or the late Jerome Hamer, O.P., Quinn cannot resist showing irritation at their flip-flops. Ratzinger completely reversed his view of bishops' conferences between 1964 and 1984, without adducing good theological justifications. And Hamer did

the same when he publicly changed his teaching about "episcopal collegialities." They both altered their views on the basis of a selective (mis)reading of a few lines by theologian Willy Onclin, and without regard to history.

The Reform of the Papacy is a radical book, in that its proposals could have far-reaching effect. It is also radical because it goes to the root, the *radix*.

The Reform of the Papacy is also a conservative, traditional book. Quinn grounds virtually every argument in older, longer traditions than those relied upon by self-protective members of the curia, counselors to the pope who downgrade bishops and frustrate expressions of collegiality, or those who would restore some pre-Vatican II concepts that isolate and elevate the pope.

What business does a Lutheran have coming on the scene and commenting on this intramural Catholic affair? How can he make judgments that find Quinn on target? Answer: The business was set forth by the pope himself in *Ut unum sint*. He says we Christians are all in this together. But on what basis can this reviewer comment? I'm happy to say that the crucial evidence is in this carefully documented, all too brief book itself. (Applause also for Quinn the pedagogue, who explains every possibly obscure term and does so without condescension.)

The documentation confirms suspicions many of us have after observing conflicts in bodies as disparate as Catholicism and Baptist churches: The reformers get criticized as modernizers, if not modernists, by traditionalists. But the same reformers can show, as Quinn does here, that the tradition to which the defensive refer is confined to hardline interpretations derived from the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries' codifications at the Council of Trent or the First Vatican

Council. Those resisting change overlook most developments in the early and medieval church and many orthodox reforms through the past century. Having that pointed out will lead the criticized to get their backs up. One wishes—one hopes—that it could also lead them to have eyes and minds opened.

I hope that sentence does not sound condescending. It comes as a fervent prayer—are reviewers allowed to pray in midreview?—prompted by the invitations of *Ut unum sint*. Quinn quotes the encyclical: “How could [believers] refuse to do everything possible, with God’s help, to break down the walls of division and distrust, to overcome obstacles and prejudices which thwart the proclamation of the gospel of salvation in the Cross of Jesus...?” And “This unity, which the Lord has bestowed on his church, and in which he wishes to embrace all people, is not something added on, but stands at the very heart of Christ’s mission. Nor is it some secondary attribute of the community of his disciples. Rather it belongs to the very essence of this community.”

That claim gets forgotten in many intrachurch quarrels. Our Lutheran hearts were quickened by the October 1999 statement of the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation affirming so much in each other’s central witness. And on the more domestic level, many of us feel that the probably imminent “full communion” between Lutherans and Episcopalians, alongside Lutheran full communion with three Reformed bodies, are at least small signs that “the very essence of this community” and the “proclamation of the gospel of salvation in the Cross of Jesus” are worth the inconvenience and adjustments experienced at this turn of the millennium.

Quinn’s book certainly furthers the cause. One hopes that the arguments it inspires will be waged in modes as evangelical and thoughtful as those he manifests. □

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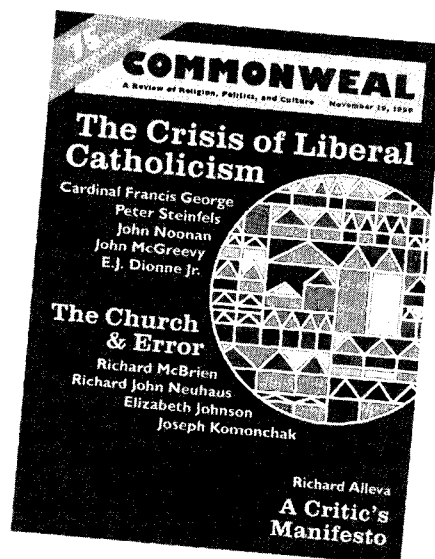
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Cambridge, \$18.95, 400 pp.

M. Therese Lysaught

Lord Gifford would be pleased. Endowed upon his death in 1888, the distinguished Gifford Lectures were established to "promote and diffuse the study of natural theology in the widest sense of the term—in other words, the knowledge of God," as well as to address "the knowledge of the nature and foundation of ethics." In his 1997 Gifford Lectures, Holmes Rolston, university distinguished professor of philosophy at Colorado State University, the "father of environmental ethics," and eminent scholar of biology and religion, carries the torch admirably.

More important, however, he takes on

sociobiology. With Richard Dawkins and E.O. Wilson as his primary interlocutors, the project outlined is as follows:

At issue is whether the impressive genesis across evolutionary history, which in retrospect has been linked to genes, is now, with culture in prospect, so constrained by these genes that no one can think without survival and reproduction as the bottom-line logic determining the outcome of all thought.

His simple answer is "no." His argument, of course, is more complex. Comprising six lengthy and detailed chapters, Rolston treats sequentially the topics of "Genetic Values," "Genetic Identity," "Culture," "Science," "Ethics," and "Religion." Three simultaneous tasks, however, structure the book as a whole.

First, in each chapter, Rolston challenges the assumptions and arguments of those who call themselves "sociobiologists." Again and again, he deconstructs the "selfish" gene edifice, both on genetic grounds and as applied to the realms of science, ethics, and religion. Various claims and permutations of self-

ish-gene theorists are presented carefully (at times, perhaps, in too much detail). Analyzed against the biological data, the canons of logic, and "our native range experiences," one claim after another collapses. Beyond reductionism and determinism (serious problems themselves simply from a scientific standpoint), the fatal flaw of sociobiology lies in its critical sloppiness. Sociobiologists "mistakenly transfer cultural phenomena back into biological phenomena and misinterpret what is going on." Can it be a coincidence that the theory of "selfish" genes emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, the era of the "me-generation" and "greed is good"? Culturally loaded terms and concepts exacerbate category mistakes.

Rolston's second task is to construct an alternative reading of the biological data. If genes are not selfish, then how ought they be described? Rolston suggests that they are *loci* of "shared value." At the genetic level, he clearly does not jettison the Darwinian notion of reproductive fitness. Within this framework, he trades on the contemporary metaphor that genes encode "information," which allows organisms to navigate and flourish in environments. Through mutation, genes test different strategies for enhancing ecological survival. Those that work mark new "discoveries about life," which are passed along to the next generation. Thus, the genome becomes a cumulative, transmissible *locus* of new information. Because this information confers survival advantage, it is of value. Thus, "genes can be interpreted as *loci* of intrinsic value."

Moreover, through reproduction, one's new information becomes mixed with that of others (through meiotic mating) and distributed to future generations. The central feature of genes, then, becomes "their power to send information to the next generation....[G]enetic information gets allocated and reallocated, portioned out...widely distributed, communicated, networked, and shared throughout natural history." In other words, evolutionary history is the story of the discovery, conservation, accumulation, and proliferation of values: Kindred organisms, indeed the entire bios-

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phere, are no longer "selfish" but rather creatures of "shared values."

This account of biological life provides the basis for Rolston's third task, namely, to provide an account of the genesis of culture. Here, the logic becomes more complicated. Rolston wishes to break with a dogmatized Darwinism, recasting culture as indeed rooted in biology but, more important, transcending it. Culture's roots in biology allow Rolston to posit analogies between his account of genes and the development of the three cultural realms of science, ethics, and religion. Culture's singularity and specific characteristics render the simplistic sociobiological mantra (that the unconscious desire to maximize numbers of offspring and enhance reproductive fitness is the sole driving force behind science, ethics, and religion) absurd.

For Rolston and most likely for many *Commonweal* readers, the ultimate question is that of religion. Two questions are posed: "Is there a plausible account of the genesis of religion, relating its origin to genes?" and "Is there a plausible religious account of genes and their genesis?" Rolston's answer is that religion emerges as a response to nature—to nature's creative generativity, prolific, pro-life complexity, diversity, fecundity, and fertility. Indispensably coupled with this fertility are struggle, wastage, death, pain, and suffering. Human minds, he argues, have gained the ability to perceive this wonder and properly sense in it the sacred.

But can biology point to the "truth" of religious beliefs? Arguing against those who hold that religion is simply an illusory mythology which is successfully functional (*vis-à-vis* reproductive fitness) or an epiphenomenal anomaly, "like dreams, that have little to do with the real world," Rolston holds that through religion, as through science and ethics, humans achieve new levels of insight. He draws an analogy to his account of the function of genes. Certainly, he argues, religions have some functional value; in general they enhance human flourishing. If so, there must be some truth in them, for species that misperceive their environments or have false information about their world do

not survive. Moreover, the fact that only approximately ten major world religions now remain out of the a hundred thousand that emerged over the course of human history mirrors the process of biological evolution as well. Just as different genetic mutations and scientific or ethical theories are generated and tested by trial and error, religions that survive do so because "they have a good deal of corroboration and have not yet been falsified." Each successful variant encodes new information, a new dis-

covery into the cumulative, transmissible information that structures human culture.

After providing a naturalized account of religion, Rolston turns to his final subject, that of "a plausible religious account of genes and their genesis." God, one of the title characters, makes a relatively late appearance, not entering the discussion in more than an anticipatory fashion until page 359 (eleven pages before the end of the text). Allusions to God and examples from Christianity

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(along with Judaism and Buddhism) pepper the text throughout but more substantive natural theology could be desired. Rolston's thesis at the end is relatively straightforward: God accounts for the dramatic emergent events that have occurred on the earth over the course of evolutionary history. This is not an argument from design, not the anthropic principle; for Rolston, ecological biology refutes any claim that either human life or the unique transitions in evolutionary history were inevitable. God is the "ground of information or an ambience of information," that interjects quanta of needed "information," or value, into creative processes.

This portrays a loose teleology, a soft concept of creation, one that permits genuine, though not ultimate, integrity and autonomy in the creatures. The divine spirit is the giver of life, pervasively present over the millennia. God is the atmosphere of possibilities, the metaphysical environment in, with, and under first the natural and later the cultural environment, luring the earthen histories up the slope. God orchestrates such self-organizing, steadily elevating the pos-

sibilities, making for storied achievements, enriching the values generated.

In meeting these three tasks, Rolston provides ample fodder for his critics. Sociobiologists will counter his counter-arguments. Others may well take issue with the language which shapes his constructive account. Genes remain anthropomorphized, as smart, discovering, searching problem-solvers. As sociobiology reflects the 1970s and '80s, Rolston's rhetoric is '90s vintage—information, diversity, cybernetic, sharing, values, love, justice, freedom. Might it not be a category mistake to analogize evolution from biology to culture, to posit societies acting like species? Still others will find that his account of the divine bears little resemblance to any actual, living religion. These criticisms notwithstanding, Rolston's book is a must-read for anyone interested in this conversation. If nothing else, Rolston provides a potent counterpoint to E. O. Wilson's recent and widely-acclaimed *Consilience*. □

M. Therese Lysaught teaches in the religious studies department at the University of Dayton.

disposed to tolerate vernacular translations of the Scriptures, or writers too much influenced by such humanists as Erasmus.

Cathleen Medwick pays glancing attention to these swirling eddies of intellectual and spiritual experimentation; her main focus is on the life of Teresa. Medwick traces Teresa's early years, her entrance into the genteel life of the Convent of the Incarnation in Ávila, her second conversion as a person of prayer, and her subsequent trials as a founder of reformed monasteries of women under the austere rule of Mount Carmel. By the time of her death in 1581, Teresa had founded more than a dozen monastic houses. She accomplished this by surmounting obstructive civil authorities who saw no need for yet another convent in their cities, by surviving wrangles with church authorities over how the convents were to constitute themselves, and by besting ever intrusive aristocrats who would supply monies but felt their generosity allowed them the right to determine how the nuns were to live.

Readers disinclined to learn much about the ecclesiastical and civil machinations of the period may sigh with impatience at the author's attention to these matters. However, they will not fail to see, in Medwick's telling, how this extraordinary woman, with her relentless will (Teresa called it *muy determinada determinacion*), her overwhelming sense of the presence of God, her extraordinary administrative skills, her mastery of diplomacy, and her capacity for the subtle application of flattery—as well as her uncanny ability to get her way while being obedient to her superiors—became one of the most luminous and attractive figures in the history of Christian holiness.

In the midst of all her labors and travel, Teresa also managed to compose some significant books and a vast corpus of letters. She wrote, at the instigation of her confessor, her autobiography (*Mi Vida*), which shows the influence of Augustine's *Confessions* newly available to her in a vernacular translation, as well as *The Way of Perfection*, her book of *Foundations*, and a commentary on the

ONE SHREWD LADY

Teresa of Ávila
The Progress of a Soul
 By Cathleen Medwick
 Alfred A. Knopf, \$26. 264 pp.

Lawrence S. Cunningham

Teresa of Ávila's life spanned the better part of the sixteenth century. Barely a generation before her birth in 1515 unconverted Jews were expelled from Spain in the same year that Christopher Columbus sailed west for the Indies. Both events would impact Teresa's life. Her own family came from *converso* stock who fell under the suspicion of the In-

quisition. Later in her life, her religious foundations would benefit from the monies her brothers earned in the New World. Sixteenth-century Spain flourished both economically and culturally. This was the century of Ignatius Loyola, Philip II, Cervantes, El Greco, Zurbarán, Saint John of the Cross, to say nothing of Teresa herself. It was also the century of the Protestant Reformation as well as the Catholic reform whose energies were crystallized in the work of the Council of Trent.

The Spanish Inquisition busied itself not only with the rising tide of mainly female visionaries and mystics whose experiences needed the check of orthodoxy but also with Judaizers among the *conversos*, and the infiltration of Protestants who went under the generic term of *los luteranos*. Nor was the Inquisition

Song of Songs. And then there is her masterpiece, *The Interior Castle*. All of these works were written out of need or out of obedience. Her commentary on the Song of Songs was a daring enterprise since women were not considered to be capable of teaching theology. It is worthwhile to remember that a friar who was her contemporary spent some years in a prison for translating the Song into Spanish.

Medwick is no theologian, so her analysis of these texts is fairly conventional. Nonetheless, we must be grateful that she resists the reductionist temptation. She allows Teresa to speak, she takes seriously the saint's self-understanding that she has had deep spiritual experiences, and she never explains Teresa's writings as mere erotic sublimations (although there is a deep strain of the erotic in her writing) or some sort of psychological construct. Nor, we might note in passing, is her book burdened with that tedious jargon that mars so much contemporary academic writing about Teresa. Medwick, in short, presents Teresa at face value while keeping a keen awareness that the formulations and the vocabulary of a sixteenth-century nun whose wellsprings are a spiritual tradition that goes back into the early patristic period cannot but sound strange to the modern ear.

A Roman nuncio of the time described her as an "unstable, restless, disobedient, and contumacious female who, in the name of devotion, devised false doctrines...teaching as if she were a master in spite of Saint Paul's order that women should not teach." The word "master" meant a theologian who could expound the Scriptures. Teresa's right to teach, however, would not be vindicated until our time when the late Paul VI named her a doctor of the church. In her own lifetime Teresa had the good sense to ally herself with outstanding supporters such as the observant Franciscan Peter Alcantara and the famous Dominican theologian, Domenico Báñez. To aid her reforming efforts she enlisted a young Carmelite friar, nearly three decades her junior, named John of the Cross, to begin a reform among the male Carmelites. John was her sometime confessor and

perhaps the only person, male or female, before whom Teresa stood in awe. Teresa called him, jokingly, "half a friar" (because of his diminutive size) and her "little Seneca" because of his learning and discretion. They were not close friends but esteemed colleagues.

In 1588 Luis de Leon edited Teresa's writings for publication and included an apologetic introduction indicating that her work was firmly rooted in the tradition of Christian spirituality. In 1622 Teresa was canonized. In that same

period, her sisters brought Teresa's teachings on prayer to France. Radiating from those French Carmels, the influence of Teresa helped nourish the seventeenth-century movement we now call the "French School of Spirituality." In the summer of 1921 a young philosopher, Edith Stein, picked up a copy of Teresa's autobiography and read it straight through one evening. When she finished, she tells us that she said "this is the truth." A year later, she sought baptism and subsequently entered a

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Carmelite convent in Cologne, Germany, taking the name Benedicta of the Holy Cross.

There is an eerie symmetry between these two women: both of Jewish background, both powerful intellects, both nurtured in the mystical tradition of the Carmelites, and both writers. In his recent encyclical *Fides et ratio*, John Paul

II lists Edith Stein as one of the figures he sees as a model for those who have integrated the life of the mind with the life of the spirit. Teresa, as Medwick makes clear, was not by the standards of the day a *letrado* (a "lettered one"). Her Latin was sparse, her writing style is not elegant (in the autobiography, she has a multichaptered digression!), and

her reading depended very much on what she could find in the vernacular. But as this biography makes clear, she was an authentic religious genius. □

Lawrence S. Cunningham writes the "Religion Book Notes" for *Commonweal*. He teaches theology at the University of Notre Dame.

COPS & BARTENDERS

My Father's Gun One Family, Three Badges, One Hundred Years in the NYPD Brian McDonald

Dutton, \$24.95, 309 pp.

Maurice Timothy Reidy

As a saloonkeeper in the Bronx in the 1940s, my grandfather was always wary when a cop walked into his bar. For him, policemen weren't good customers. They tended to make a lot of noise, drink too much, and act insulted when their bar tab actually reflected how much they had consumed. For my grandfather, cops—much like

baseball players and army veterans—acted as if their uniform gave them a license to behave boorishly.

I was reminded of my grandfather while reading Brian McDonald's *My Father's Gun*. McDonald comes from a long line of cops (his maternal grandfather, father, and brother all served in the New York Police Department) and his book recounts their years at home and on the job. In particular, the author focuses on how his blue brethren—none of them particularly heroic or corrupt—were able to hold down such an exacting job and raise a family at the same time. In this regard, McDonald sets out to help all of those who (like my grandfather) may have some distaste for cops understand the stories behind police dramas and the 11 P.M. news.

In this project, McDonald is largely successful. He gives a compelling behind-the-scenes look at the life of a New York City cop. In fact, the greatest asset

of McDonald's book is that he chooses to pay attention to the neighborhoods and families behind the men in blue. (A simple approach, yes, but not one which has been done much before—by writers or television producers.) For instance, in one passage, the author describes his mother's life as the matriarch of a cop family: "Sometimes, as she listened to her son's cop's talk, she would put down her crossword and close her eyes like someone listening to a sad aria. I realize now that that song had played for the whole of my mother's life, and, for her, it was both painful and impossible not to listen to."

McDonald also gives us a rare portrait of the cop hamlet known as Pearl River, New York. (The author's father was one of the first twelve New York City cops—dubbed later the "Apostles"—to break department rules forbidding cops to live outside the city and to move his family into this suburb across the Hudson River.) As McDonald ably shows, this town—packed with over-worked men trying to leave the violence of the city behind—is a sociology dissertation waiting to be written.

My Father's Gun also works because it is more than a memoir. In addition to plumbing the depths of three generations of family drama, McDonald gives us a sharp history of the NYPD. The McDonald family saga begins with Thomas Skelly, McDonald's maternal grandfather. The son of Irish immigrants, Skelly entered the police department when Tammany Hall ruled New York politics. McDonald nimbly maneuvers his narrative from a history of his grandfather to a history of the department and some of its most colorful characters. We meet William Devary, "the obese and corrupt chief of police who once owned the New York High-

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landers, a baseball team later sold to Colonel Jacob Ruppert and renamed the New York Yankees." McDonald's narrative is equally engaging when we meet the author's father, Frank McDonald—the son of an immigrant coal miner who used the civil service exam to climb the NYPD's professional ladder.

The chapters on the author's brother (Frank, Jr.), however, aren't as strong. While Frank, Jr.'s difficulties dealing with a city consumed by racial tensions and a drug epidemic give us an important glimpse into the problems that tore at the heart of the metropolis in the 1970s and 1980s, the narrative loses its momentum here. These pages often read like a string of stories from the precinct pub, connected by a few significant events (promotions, marriage, birth of a child, etc.). His brother's tale, while fascinating at times, does not merit the space (it numbers twice as many pages as any other section) McDonald devotes to it.

The most poignant moments in this book remain those in which the author reveals his own story. McDonald once considered becoming a cop, but decided instead, after working odd acting and bartending jobs, to become a writer. In fact, the struggle between McDonald's identity as the grandson/son/brother of a cop and his identity as a writer is ever-present—even when McDonald himself does not make an appearance on the page. For the author's own literary style—his use of metaphor, simile, and anecdote—reveals that struggle. At times, McDonald's writing seems clearly the property of the NYPD and all of its trite bar-room banter: "At home he was a father who put his whole heart into trying to build a home for his family. In the city, that heart was often covered with a bulletproof vest." At other times, his writing has a touch of poetry: "The night hummed with a high-pitched crackle, like a radio station not quite tuned in." It seems that the author is, at points, too close to the NYPD to write about it with the clarity and nuance of which he is clearly capable. □

Maurice Timothy Reidy is an editorial assistant at Commonweal.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 4)

ministries and at Creighton University's Center for Marriage and Family. In his article, and in *The Catholic Myth*, Greeley rather cavalierly dismisses the pastoral experiences of most other priests who believe that the rate of interfaith marriage has been increasing. Even Greeley says he is "virtually the only one in the public arena of the church" who still believes that young

people "are still strongly attached to Catholicism, if in their own way." The experiences of most church leaders suggest, and most research confirms, that "in their own way" means less frequent Mass attendance, more disagreement with church teachings about what it means to be a good Catholic, an increasing inclination to marry non-Catholics, and a growing willingness to marry outside the church.

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BE STILL

Vincent P. Stanton

In *Teaching a Stone to Talk*, Annie Dillard wrote of herself: "I have a taste for solitude and silence, and for what Plotinus called 'the flight of the alone to the Alone.'" I wonder if she does not speak for many. It takes courage to be alone...and a lot of work to "make" the time. We deny ourselves solitude, convinced it's the right thing to do. The immediacy of other realities in our lives, such as family and work, presses in on us.

I'm one of the lucky ones who haven't always been forced to suppress the desire. For the past half-dozen years the need has been met, in part, by spending several days each year at the Trappist monastery in Spencer, Massachusetts. Since one must reserve a room six months in advance, I made plans last fall to visit this Lent. There is great irony in choosing the penitential season to spend a few days at the monastery because, with little doubt, it is the most "self-indulgent" week of my year!

Annual retreats were *de regueur* at Jesuit high schools and universities when I was a student. Their success seemed to depend on their intensity, and their intensity depended on the rhetorical ability of the preacher to inspire a sense of contrition for past offenses. There was a flight, but the flight was more from than toward. But not always; one of my earliest retreat memories is of a quiet-mannered Jesuit seated at a small table in front of the high altar, summoning us into retreat with the words of the psalmist, "Be still and know that I am God."

Later, career building and attention to family take hold. Solitude and silence seem an unaffordable luxury. The words of the Jewish (later Catholic) psychiatrist, Iolande Jacobi, come to mind: Human life is something "outward and discrete and centrifugal, a continuous

dying into the full life of the self through the self's dissipation in action" (*Masks of the Soul*). So we rationalize that a sixty-hour work week is the path to the core of our being. (It even gets so bad for some that a retreat is seen in terms of "career enhancement," the opportunity to establish an inner calm that allows the subconscious to strategize!) But awareness that God speaks to us in silence grows, and the urge for genuine withdrawal persists.

For many years I found myself at House of Prayer on the Beach, run by the late Sister Isabel Green at the Jesuit retreat center in Gloucester, Massachusetts. It was located in the servants' quarters above the kitchen at the old estate, but closed after her death in 1986. It was populated almost exclusively by nuns in transition from one apostolate to another. Some came for a week, many for thirty days, others for a year. There were Eucharistic adoration around the clock, liturgies at the Jesuit retreat house, and otherwise perfect silence, save for the pounding of the waves upon the rocks. As an interloper, I was kept at a safe distance. On my first visit, I was invited to sleep on a cot in an unfinished basement where I could lie awake at night listening to the mice crawl through the wood pile about three feet from my head. ("Watch Thou, oh Lord, with those who watch or wake or weep this night...") On my second and subsequent visits, I was allowed upstairs.

On my first attempt to spend time with the Trappists at Spencer, I was unable to get a room at the abbey, so I stayed at Mary House, about a mile away. It too is a house of prayer, so graciously, tastefully, and comfortably appointed that a spirit of peace and reverence comes easily. Privacy and quiet also abound. I cooked alone, ate alone, and

walked alone four times a day up the steep hill to the monastery to participate in the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.

A stay at the monastery guest house itself will mean something different to each person who goes there. But it is hard to imagine anyone coming away unaffected by the life and by the liturgy, particularly if one is able to begin the day with the monks at their vigil. The hours between 3:30 A.M. and 7 A.M. are precious ones!

Those who love music might liken the experience to attendance at a concert. For me, attendance at a symphony concert is a transporting, even a transcendent experience. The pleasure is visual as well as auditory. I am awed each time by the realization that eighty-some people have come together for the sole purpose of creating, afresh, a work of beauty; and that hundreds have left their quotidian world behind to share in that experience. One is twice blest, first by the genius of the composer and second by the artistry of the orchestra members. The total experience humanizes the listener by helping him or her to realize what we are capable of and to what we are called.

The experience at Spencer is parallel, but the inspiration is not simply from the monastic music, beautiful as it is. Rather, we begin to appreciate that these eighty monks have given their lives totally to the perfection of an art, so that both individually and as a community they may render more perfectly a symphony of oblation to the composer in whom are found all beauty, goodness, and truth.

And, there is silence. □

Vincent P. Stanton, a retired investment manager, lives in Massachusetts.



The bell rings at 8:30, and a roomful of kids pile in. But for some, school is never out, and class is never dismissed.

St. Louis,
Missouri
November 19, 1998
8:25 a.m.

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